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3 April 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting on Cuba

PRESENT: The President, the Attorney General, Secretary Vance,  
Mr. Bundy, Mr. Dungan, Mr. Martin, Mr. Harwitch,  
Mr. Helms, Mr. FitzGerald, Mr. Colafano

1. The President asked Mr. FitzGerald whether the exile raids accomplish anything worth while. The latter replied that he thought they do not accomplish anything except perhaps to bolster morale of the exiles; on the other hand the affect on people still in Cuba can be counterproductive to some degree. The President said that he does not object to these raids if they really strike worthwhile targets rather than the "froth" which their acts to date have represented. He added that he had no objection to raids from the sea unless they were directed at Soviet ships. He also said we cannot condone the holding of press conferences by the exiles after such raids.
2. Mr. FitzGerald gave a summary of the results of agent operations to date. He noted that failures in black operations have been due to weather, lack of reception, hostile activities in the area, and mechanical failures; only three failures have been due to refusal of the agents to continue. He emphasized the fact that the Cubans are very good at counterinsurgency - that is putting down resistance groups - but not very good at sophisticated counterintelligence operations. He noted that there has been no particular trouble in recruiting agents, but that it is not always possible to match the qualifications and experience of these operatives with desired targets. Mr. FitzGerald added that the classic Communist "block system" is particularly effective in uncovering illegal residents.
3. The President asked whether sabotage operations are now under way. Mr. Bundy pointed out that they are not, because the Special Group had decided - based to a considerable extent on the difficulties encountered in mounting the mine operation - that such activity is not worth the effort expended on it, in relation to the results that could be obtained in the intelligence field. The latter has been considered to have priority and to be more practicable. Mr. Martin added that it had also been felt that sabotage by itself was not particularly productive and that it should be done primarily in conjunction with other activities.

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- 2 -

In answer to the President's question, a number of people said that acts of sabotage might have some beneficial results from the U.S. point of view, both from the standpoint of the intrinsic economic damage that might be done, and also for the psychological effect of making it evident that internal resistance to Castro exists. (In the latter connection, Mr. FitzGerald made the point that recent exfiltrates have said that there is now no organized resistance inside Cuba.)

4. In answer to the Attorney General's question, Mr. FitzGerald said that immediate plans are primarily based on obtaining fuller intelligence coverage of the island, with emphasis on filling in existing geographic gaps. He said that perhaps the most important question in this context is whether time is on our side or on Castro's, and added that the Board of National Estimates is currently investigating this question. Mr. FitzGerald added that in his opinion there is no chance of a successful civilian uprising against Castro because of the strength of Castro's security measures, but that we are hopeful of accomplishing penetrations of the military establishment; on the other hand, it is doubtful whether any such contacts would be willing to communicate among themselves, for fear of provocation.

5. The Attorney General asked whether it might not be useful to consider commando-type raids by groups of from 100 to 500 men. Mr. FitzGerald pointed out that if such groups could be landed it would probably be impossible for them to survive for any length of time. Mr. Bundy added that under these circumstances we would then have to face the problem of whether the U.S. would actually back up those men. The Attorney General urged, in any case, that CIA survey all possibilities for aggressive action in Cuba over the next six months, assuming that the Agency could be given a free rein to proceed.

6. The President summed up the meeting by directing the following:

- a. The intelligence estimate on Castro's probable future strength should be completed as soon as possible.
- b. CIA should examine exactly what might be accomplished in the field of sabotage during the next six months.
- c. A meeting should be held next week to review the proposed sabotage program.

(Signed) Thomas A. Parrott

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